

Sūrah At-Takāthur (Competition in Amassing)

This Sūrah is Makkī, and it has 8 verses

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

أَلْهِكُمْ التَّكَاثُرُ ﴿١﴾ حَتَّى زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ ﴿٢﴾ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣﴾
ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤﴾ كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ ﴿٥﴾
لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ ﴿٦﴾ ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ ﴿٧﴾ ثُمَّ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ
عَنِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٨﴾

You are distracted by mutual competition in amassing (worldly benefits), [1] until you reach the graves. [2] No! (This is not a correct attitude.) You will soon know (the reality). [3] Again, you will soon know. [4] No! if you have had sure knowledge (of the Hereafter, you would not have been so distracted) [5] You will certainly see the Hell, [6] then you will see it with an eye of certainty. [7] Then you will be asked about all the pleasures (you enjoyed in the world). [8]

Special Merit of Sūrah At-Takāthur

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have once asked the noble Companions: "Is there anyone from amongst you who has the strength to recite one thousand verses a day?" The blessed Companions replied: "Who can recite a thousand verses a day?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: "Can you not recite Sūrah At-Takāthur?" This implies that Sūrah At-Takāthur equals in weight and worth to a thousand verses, thus stressing its great

importance. [Maẓharī with reference to Ḥākim and Baihaqī on the authority of Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه].

Warning Against Materialistic Attitude

Verse [1] **أَلْهَيْكُمُ التَّكَاثُرُ** (You are distracted by mutual competition in amassing [worldly benefits].) The word *takāthur* is derived from the root *kathrah*, and means 'to amass much wealth'. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه and Ḥasan Baṣrī رحمه الله تعالى have assigned this interpretation to it. Qatādah رضي الله عنه says that this word is also used in the sense of 'taking pride in the abundance of material goods'. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه reports that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ recited this verse and explained its meaning, thus: "Acquiring wealth but not paying out of it the obligatory dues." [Qurṭubī].

Verse [2] **حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ** (until you reach the graves.) Here the words 'reaching the graves' mean 'to die and be buried in the graves', as the following Prophetic Ḥadīth bears testimony to this interpretation. Referring to verse [2] of this Sūrah, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: **حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ** "until death overtakes you" [Ibn Kathīr, from by Ibn Abī Ḥātim]. The verse thus implies that many people are engrossed in acquiring worldly goods and racing each other in wealth and children etc. and remain neglectful of the Hereafter till death comes upon them, and then they are seized by the divine punishment. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Shikhkhīr رضي الله عنه reports that one day he visited the Holy Prophet ﷺ while the latter was reciting Sūrah At-Takāthur and was saying:

يقول ابن آدم مالي مالي وهل لك من مالك إلا ما أكلت فأفانيت أو لبست فأبليت
أو تصدقت فأمضيت، وفي رواية لمسلم وما سوى ذلك فذهب وتاركة للناس.
(ابن كثير وقرطبي بروايت مسلم، ترمذی احمد)

"The Son of 'Ādam says: 'My wealth, my wealth.' But you do not reap any benefit from your wealth except for that which you ate and you finished it, or that which you clothed yourself with and you wore it out, or that which you gave as charity and you have spent it."

And in a narration by Muslim: "Everything else other than that will go away, and he will leave it for other people.(i.e. inheritors)" [Ibn Kathīr and Qurṭubī as transmitted by Muslim, Tirmidhī and Aḥmad].

Imām Bukhārī records from Sayyidnā Anas رضي الله عنه that the Messenger of

Allah ﷻ said:

لو كان لابن آدم وادياً من ذهب لاحتب ان يكون له واديان ولن يملأ فاه الا التراب
ويتوب الله على من تاب.

"If the Son of 'Ādam has a valley of gold, he would love to have two valleys, and nothing but the dust of grave will fill his mouth. And Allah accepts the repentance of him who turns to Him in penitence."

Sayyidnā 'Ubayy Ibn Ka'b رضي الله عنه, referring to the Tradition quoted above, says, "We used to think that this was a part of the Qur'ān until the first verse of Sūrah At-Takāthur was revealed." It seems that the Holy Prophet ﷺ recited the verse and interpreted it in his own words. As a result, some of the Companions were under the impression that the Prophetic words were part of the Qur'ān. Later on, when the Sūrah was recited in its entirety, it did not contain the Prophetic words. This made them realize that the Prophetic words were actually of explanatory nature, and not part of the Qur'ān.

Verse [102:5] كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ (No! if you have had sure knowledge..) The word 'if' requires a principal clause that seems missing here, but the context suggests that the sense is the following: "If you had the sure knowledge of accountability on the Day of Judgement, you would not have engrossed yourselves in mutual competition in acquiring worldly goods and taking pride in their abundance."

Verse [102:7] ثُمَّ لَتَرَوُنَّهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ (...then you will see it with an eye of certainty.) The phrase '*ain-ul-yaqīn*' (translated above as 'eye of certainty') refers to the certainty attained by physical observation, and this is the highest degree of certainty. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه reports that when Holy Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام was on the mount of Tūr, his people started worshipping a calf. Allah informed him about this while he was still on the mountain. This piece of information did not affect Mūsā عليه السلام so much. However, when he returned and saw the Children of Israel, with his own eyes, worshipping the calf, he became so indignant that the tablets of Torah involuntarily fell from his hands. [Transmitted by Aḥmad and Ṭabarāni with an authentic chain of narrators, as quoted by Maḥzarī].

Verse [102:8] ثُمَّ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ يَوْمَئِذٍ عَنِ النَّعِيمِ (Then you will be asked about all the pleasures [you enjoyed in the world].) This means that, on the Day of

Judgment, all of you will be questioned whether you had shown gratitude towards Allah's favors, or did you misuse them and were ungrateful to Allah? Some of these favors and bounties are explicitly mentioned elsewhere in the Qur'an:

إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

(...Surely, the ear, the eye and the heart - each one of them shall be interrogated about.) [17:36]

These organs and their faculties comprehend millions of blessings of Allah, and man will be questioned as to how he used them every moment of his life.

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is reported to have said that first question that will be put by Allah to every person is: "Did I not give you good health, and did I not give you cold water to quench your thirst?" (Tirmidhī, and Ibn Ḥibbān, with rating as *ṣaḥīḥ*, from Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه, as quoted by Ibn Kathīr)

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ is also reported to have said that no man will be able to move from his place unless he answers five questions: [1] How did he spend his life?; [2] In what pursuits did he expend his youthful energy?; [3] How did he earn his wealth - (by lawful means or unlawful means?); [4] Where did he spend his wealth - (in lawful ways or unlawful ways?); and [5] Did he act upon the knowledge Allah gave him? (Bukhārī).

Mujāhid, the leading authority on Tafsīr, says that this question on the Day of Judgement relates to every delight of the world that he enjoyed - whether it is in connection with food, clothes, house, wife, children, kingdom, government or honor. Qurṭubī, having cited this, concludes that this is absolutely true, because the question does not specify any particular blessing.

Alḥamdulillah
The Commentary on
Sūrah At-Takāthur
Ends here